

# THE FAMILY STORY

## THE : SUBJUGATION : OF : AH : SING.

A woman may be mistress of herself though china fall, up to a certain limit, beyond which no conception of heroism reaches. The model woman screams at a spider, and discusses the merits of wired sleeves serenely while a priceless vase goes crashing to the floor. Such is the standard of feminine courage, the foot-rule by which a woman may be measured. Yet when not one piece of china, but two pieces, and three, and four, fall, the standard becomes useless. A woman is not expected to bear more.

Yet more came. There was a fifth crash in the kitchen. Mrs. Melville stopped in the midst of telling Ritchie of the sixth—that anchovy paste was to be struck off the commissary list; she stopped and looked appealingly at Melville.

"Austin, can't you do something?" Austin gathered up his napkin, put his hand on the table, and started to push back his chair; then he sank down again and restored his napkin to its place on his knee. "If I go in there and he gets impatient, I'll break his head—which would be bad for his head and, incidentally, for my official neck."

"But it's head or china." "Well, there is plenty more china—and when that gives out the quartermaster has a new invoice of tinware." "But, seriously, Austin, there won't be a thing left for the general to eat off of. What are we going to do about it?"

"I think the epidemic is over. There has not been a dish broken that I know of in five minutes. You must be reasonable, and make due allowances for him, Matty. It's hot out there. It's hot here, too. It's hotter than blazes everywhere."

"I think, my dear, you are bordering on profanity. Of course it's hot. Within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, it has never been even cool in Arizona in July. You really can't expect the inspector general to bring ice. Mr. Ritchie, don't you think he ought to do something?"

"I must respectfully decline to enter into a family difference. You and Melville must settle the question between yourselves. Only let me suggest that if it comes to the actual breaking of heads, I'd take it out on Sing, and not on one another."

"There! Austin," fairly screamed Mrs. Melville, jumping up, "there goes another; and yet you sit and laugh. Oh, how horrid you can be!"

"Sit down, Matty, and talk sense. Suppose I should go out there and attempt to reason with Sing. In the natural sequence of events it would come to pass that in his present humor he would be so angry that I should feel obliged, as I said, to break his head. Apart from the distant consequences of that act, you can see that the near ones would be pretty bad. You'd have to wash the breakfast dishes, and do the housework, and also cook and serve the general's dinner. Therefore, the inadvisability of my reducing Sing's head to splinters is obvious, isn't it?"

"I suppose so; but I do wish to goodness Mrs. Lawrence's cook hadn't got married."

"So does she—the cook, I mean—since O'Halloran came home drunk two nights ago, and thrashed her. He's been in the guard-house ever since, and I'm out a good man. Shows what marriage does. Before he was married, he didn't beat his wife. However, it wouldn't have made the slightest difference whether she had committed matrimony or not; the Lawrences would never have had the general nor even a single member of the staff to dinner. She never dined the paymaster, you know."

"I think it's too bad a first lieutenant's wife has to do it, and all the rest of the entertaining for the post."

"You are also the adjutant's wife, remember."

"Yes, of course. I wonder what's the matter with Sing, anyway?" "That's obvious—approaching guests," observed Ritchie, stroking and curling his unduly military mustaches, the mustaches that have entwined and ensnared so many hearts in their silken meshes since then, in the whirl of Washington society. Ritchie was Melville's second lieutenant at that time, and as he was not married, and didn't like the bachelor mess, he messaged with his senior and that young officer's wife.

"Why didn't his cousin die, then?" "Perhaps he realizes that the dead cousin's funeral is a little worn as a method of obtaining a leave."

"I should think so; one died when the paymaster was coming to dinner the time before last, and another when the Indian agent was here, and he polished off two in anticipation of the paymaster's last trip."

"That's not all, Austin," pursued Mrs. Melville. "Generally he only alarms when he has lost at faro the night before."

In pursuance of his method of warfare, Sing precipitated a chopping-bowl and knife to the floor, with a resulting noise that only the falling of those two homely utensils could possibly accomplish. Melville bit his upper lip and clenched his fist.

"I wonder if it would do any good for me to go out and speak him quietly?" suggested his wife.

"Suppose you try it. If he takes a carving-knife to you, call out and we'll come to your rescue; but unless it's an actual carving-knife, don't get us mixed up in any domestic brawl."

Mrs. Melville patted her lace-and-ribbed breakfast-cap down securely, took a long breath, arose, walked resolutely to the kitchen door, opened it, passed through, and closed it behind her.

Melville and Ritchie listened. Melville leaned back in his pine Q. M. chair, with his ear bent toward the kitchen; Ritchie scraped salt into little ridges on the cloth with his knife. They could hear the droning of Mrs. Melville's voice, then a pause, she commenced and paused again, and yet a third time, her voice rising a little higher at the

last. But Sing was worshipping the god of silence.

After the third venture Mrs. Melville came reluctantly out and resumed her seat.

"Well?" "Well, I told him."

"Yes, we heard you. But what did he do?"

"He didn't do anything—much. He just didn't answer."

"Did he turn his back on you?" "Well—yes."

"In short, he didn't pay any attention to you?"

"I suppose he didn't."

Melville took a biscuit, and passed the plate on to Ritchie. "What the dickens is one going to do about it?" he asked of the opposite wall.

"If we were only nearer some town or the railroad, we might get some one else. But if we let Sing go, it may be months before we can get anybody else. I wouldn't mind cooking for you and Mr. Ritchie so much, though it's pretty hard work, but I actually can't get up a dinner for the inspector-general and his staff, and serve the dinner, too."

A pan went clashing and clattering along the kitchen floor. Mrs. Melville sighed. Melville grew sadder, and Ritchie devoted himself to the mackerel. The shattering of a china dish broke the stillness. "That's six," breathed Mrs. Melville.

This time Melville bit his under lip as he put his napkin on the table beside his plate and pushed away his chair.

"Oh, Austin, you'd better not go," ventured his wife, mildly.

He made no answer, but strode to the door and passed through. Ritchie resumed the salt scraping, and Mrs. Melville grasped both arms of her chair and held her breath.

At first there was only the rolling of Melville's deep voice, then the sound of a sudden scuffle. Mrs. Melville gave a smothered scream and started up. "Sit down," commanded Ritchie, pushing back his own chair, but keeping his seat. Mrs. Melville sat down. There was only a momentary scraping of boots and Chinese slippers in the kitchen, then a series of thumps down the back steps and the scratching of gravel, also a low, broken murmur from the yard.

"I guess," remarked Ritchie, calmly, "that I'll go and see who's underneath."

Mrs. Melville did not attempt to move again, but she watched the second lieutenant anxiously. He strolled to the window and stood there, one hand in his trousers pocket, the other stroking the mustaches.

"Well?" ventured the young woman, finally.

Ritchie turned around and came back to his chair. "I guess Melville's doing about what he said he would—breaking Sing's head."

Weak cries like those of a little child came up from the back-yard.

"Is that Sing?" asked the lady of the house.

"It doesn't sound much like Melville."

At the end of a couple of minutes Melville went past the window and in at the side door, and a little later he came into the dining-room by the front entrance and resumed his seat. The shuffle of Sing's slippers could be heard in the kitchen. The adjutant, despite his smoothed hair and newly brushed coat, looked so ruffled as to temper that his wife wisely refrained from speech.

Ritchie was bolder. "Has the police party got to come around and pick up the pieces?"

"No; I guess he's whole."

"Is he a little more reasonable?"

"Oh, he's doing the lamb act now."

"Tell us about it, Austin," begged Mrs. Melville.

"I just told him he'd got to stop his nonsense and behave himself. Of course I didn't want to say anything ugly to make him madder. He muttered that he'd go, or something like that, and he flung the dish-towel in my face. I was a little riled at that, but I don't think I'd have done anything except kick him out, if I hadn't remembered the dinner. I knew he had to be pounded into staying. So I pounded. That's all."

Mrs. Melville drew into the sitting-room a few hours later.

"Austin, he's ravenous!"

Melville stood up, put down his newspaper, and knocked the ashes from his cigar. "I'll get him back," he said.

"How?"

"Send a detachment out for him and bring him back."

So Mrs. Melville watched and waited for half an hour, and at the end of that time heard the shuffle of feet and the tramping of boots on the porch. Sing glided into the room, followed by his master. There was a guard at the door.

"Here he is. Try the force of gentle persuasion, Matty."

Mrs. Melville was a coaxing little body; she could have moved any one but a Chinaman. Sing remained obdurate. "No," he grunted; "me no come back."

"Just to get dinner, Sing; you can go afterward."

"No."

She looked appealingly at her husband.

"Then you won't come back and get dinner to-night, Sing?" asked Melville.

"No."

"Guard, take this man and put him to chopping wood in the sun." It was rather a stretch of official and military authority, but even the commanding officer, who was to dine with the general, realized the urgency of the case.

An hour of wood-chopping under guard, under all the untamed glory of an Arizona sun, brought Sing into subjection. He appeared, drenched, perspiring, gasping, and penitent, at the door of Melville's quarters. "Miss Melville. Me want see Miss Melville."

"No; you can't see her; she's lying down."

"Yes. Me want see Miss Melville. Me tell Miss Melville me come back."

"She no want you back, Sing."

"Oh! you go tell her."

"All right. I go tell her. She no come, I think."

Melville disappeared and brought back his wife. Her face was contorted into an unrelenting frown.

"Well, Sing?" she demanded, severely. "Miss Melville, me come back."

"No. I no want you come back."

"Me cookee good dinner. Allee samee heap good. Sun heap hot, makee my head hurt," moaned the child of the Orient. "No breakie plates no more."

"All right," she confessed, reluctantly. "I keep you to-day, maybe."

"Really, Mrs. Melville," said the grizzled inspector-general, as he sat beside his brilliant little hostess at the table, and looked its length at the goodly array of yet unbroken dishes, "I can't see what you all make such a fuss about these Western stations for. Of course they're a little far from the railroad, but you have pretty good society, you dress—well, exactly as they do in Washington, so far as my masculine eyes can tell; you live on the fat of the land, to judge from what I see before me; and you certainly have excellent domestic service."

Mrs. Melville blessed the happy thought which had made her place the general so that he could not see the guard standing over the Celestial cook out in the kitchen, as the door swung to and fro. "Yes," she assented, "still there are some inconveniences."

"You seem to have overcome them."

"We have—temporarily," she answered. "Gwendolen Overton, in San Francisco Argonaut."

**BITS OF KNOWLEDGE.**

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Charlemagne possessed a tablecloth woven from asbestos. He used to astonish his guests after dinner by gathering it up and throwing it into the fire, from whence he drew it cleansed from gray and other grease.

New Hampshire has reason to be proud of her free public library system. Splendid work has been accomplished since 1892, and of the 233 cities and towns in the State there are now not more than fifty that have no free public library.

Negotiations are in progress by which the Art Institute of Chicago may become the possessor of the sixty-four paintings by Gustave Doré which for the past few years have been exhibited in this country. The price is said to be \$1,000,000.

A cave alleged to rival in extent and grandeur the great Mammoth Cave has been discovered in Edmonson County, Kentucky, in which Mammoth Cave is situated. The newspapers of that region tell many stories of the remarkable character of the new cave.

In commemoration of the victories won by the Japanese troops in China, the Buddhists of Kioto, Japan, will erect a gigantic bronze statue of Buddha in that city. It will be 120 feet in height, and the cannon captured by the Japanese during the war are to be used in making the image.

**Taught Him a Lesson.**

We may sometimes learn more from our failures than from our successes, a truth well illustrated in the case of a policeman of a Western city, as the story is told by the Cincinnati Times.

It was one of the rainiest nights of the season. The chief of police, driving home in his buggy, passed an officer who was leaning against the side of a patrol-box. The chief spoke to him, and finally invited him to ride. The policeman readily accepted the invitation, climbed into the buggy, and the following dialogue ensued:

"How long have you been on this beat, Mr. Officer?"

"Only a couple of days. I'm sub, and don't know much about the business yet."

"How far does your beat extend?"

"To Mohawk Bridge, I think."

"Who is your superintendent of police now?"

"Oh, some old German that lives up here on Hamilton Pike. Deitch is his name, but I have never seen him."

"What kind of a fellow is this Deitch? Do you know?"

"No, I don't. I hear a good deal about him from the other policemen, though. Some say he is a strict disciplinarian, some say he is a good fellow, and others say that he is a son-of-a-gun; but I don't know anything about him. I suppose he is all three."

Just then the buggy passed Mohawk Bridge, and the colonel said:

"What bridge is this?"

"Mohawk Bridge, I think they call it."

"Is it the end of your beat?"

"Oh, I guess it is; but that doesn't make much difference. It's a bad night and nothing's going on," chatted the new cop.

"Well, aren't you afraid some of your superiors will find you off your beat?"

"Not likely to. The lieutenant won't go out far to-night, and the old stiff up the pike has been snoozing for six hours, I guess. He wouldn't be around in this weather."

Here the buggy pulled up in front of the colonel's home, and turning to the man, he said:

"This is where I live, and I may as well say that I am Colonel Deitch."

The officer's eyes bulged out and his hair stood on end as he gasped, "Then I'm done for!"

"Never mind," said the chief. "Just let this be a lesson to you. Never get in a buggy with any one, never leave your beat, never go on the beat until you are familiar with its boundaries, and don't talk too much. Now get back to your post."

"And that man," says Chief Deitch, "is to-day the best officer on the force."

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